

“They are ever in our thoughts, love never dies”

By Alan Miles, [\[email\]](#), Jan 2014

I have already written something about the PDSA Animal Cemetary in Ilford and would like add something further.

The cemetery contains the graves of thirteen animals which have been awarded the Dickin Medal; 11 dogs, 1 cat, and 1 pigeon. The PDSA was established by Maria Elizabeth Dickin in 1917. Her idea was met with severe criticism from the RSPCA and other veterinary organisations. However, undaunted, she finally won approval and a great deal of help.

Later on she established a cemetery for animals at the PDSA Dispensary, in Roding Lane South at Ilford. The last I read about this cemetery, it was closed due to its lack of upkeep and maintenance, and also it became full. However, Mrs Beatrice Cook wanted the place to be restored and she also knew where all the recipients of the Dickin Medals could be located. She also wanted created, a peaceful garden of rest for the animals. In December 2007, the National Lottery Fund provided a £50,000 grant towards the work.

I would like to mention some dogs although not buried there, are still worthy of gratitude and remembrance. There was Salty a Labrador guide-dog, awarded the Dickin Medal on March 5th 2002, for remaining loyally at the side of his owner ,Omar Rivra during their escape from the World Trade Centre in New York on September 11th 2001.

Roselle a Labrador guide-dog date of award March 5th 2002, for remaining loyally at the side of his owner, Michael Hingson during their escape from World Trade Centre in New York, 2001.

Sam, German shepherd dog, Royal Army Veterinary Core, awarded posthumously on January 4th 2003. Given for outstanding gallantry in April 1998 while assigned to the Royal Canadian Regiment in Derva during the conflict in Bosnia. Herze Govina.

There is but one cat buried at the Ilford Cemetery. As a cat-lover, my greatest respect goes to him. He was Simon the Ratter, a top cat who won the DM. In 1949, on 20th April the HMS Amethyst was in trouble up the Yangtze River and was fired upon by Chinese Artillery, positioned on the Banks of The River. The captain was also Simon’s master, was

tragically killed in the incident, and Simon was wounded in the face. So Simon fled to the Petty Officers Mess, the Amethyst escaped after running the gauntlet, and returning fire to the Chinese positions. After all this on 31st July, Simon returned to his duties, the ship was running alive with rats, and Simon sprung into action killing many of them. Simon became a National hero, but after he left the navy, he missed his old crew and pined away. He was awarded the Dickin Medal posthumously.

I am indebted to author Jilly Cooper , from her book " Animals in War" for the information, and we must not forget the many thousands of mules , camels, and horses, many of whom died dreadful deaths , sometimes of hunger or from the weather conditions, or severe brutality, may God bless them all.

I don't know if many would agree with me, that wreaths should be laid at cenotaphs in memory of these animals and indeed the animals that serve today. All, I can say is I have approached certain people about this matter to get this established at the local cenotaph. And to date it looks quite promising. If anyone wishes to support this please do let me know.

You may wonder why I am writing about a cemetery in Ilford and how relevant is it to Walthamstow Memories. It was at the town hall in Walthamstow where the Headquarters of the ARP (Air-Raid Personnel) were based, who trained and handled the dogs, and a few of the dogs are buried in Ilford.

On the porch way at the entrance of the PDSA Cemetery, it is written "They are ever in our thoughts love never dies",